



## EU Platform on Animal Welfare Ninth meeting

WebEx video conference

Tuesday, 22 June 2021, 09.30 – 17.30 CET, Brussels time

The [meeting](#) was web streamed. Click [here](#) to access the recording.

### – MINUTES –

#### Opening by Chair Claire Bury, Deputy Director General for Food Sustainability, DG SANTE

*The Chair* welcomed attendees. The agenda was adopted with a request from the NL to present, under AOB, an update from the voluntary initiative on health and welfare of pets in trade.

#### Speech by Commissioner Stella Kyriakides ([video message](#))

*Commissioner Kyriakides* stressed the particular period when several animal welfare initiatives are under development and the planned revision of the EU acquis has started as announced in the Farm to Fork strategy (F2F strategy). She underlined the importance of the European Citizens' Initiative 'End the Cage Age' and, in this context, of the European Parliament resolution and of the Commission's forthcoming response to this initiative. Furthermore, the Commissioner highlighted the opportunity for the Platform to contribute to the EU dialogue for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit. She also informed of the renewal of the Platform's mandate until June 2025.

#### Introduction to the EU dialogue for the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit

*Mr Miko* presented the context of the EU Dialogue and the challenges ahead of the Food Summit foreseen to open a broad discussion on the millennium goals, sustainable development and transformation of our food system. The Summit's Action Tracks include: 1) Ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all; 2) Shift to sustainable consumption patterns; 3) Boost nature positive production; 4) Advance equitable livelihoods; 5) Build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress. All actions of the F2F strategy can be categorised along these objectives. Citizens' dialogues are a core component of the preparatory process for the Summit. The Platform has an opportunity to bring its contribution to the creation of sustainable food system.

#### Questions & Answers

*Four Paws* asked, in the context of the EU contribution to the summit, if there is anything planned to ensure the recognition of animal welfare as a cross-cutting issue and to addressing intensive farming and deforestation as part of the problem in guaranteeing sustainability.

*Eurogroup* stressed that it is good to promote legislative standards in animal welfare around the world, but that this is not enough to lead to transformation. These standards must be promoted and addressed through trade agreements, including bilateral ones. The trade mechanism could help with the transition. Without the inclusion of animal welfare requirements in trade, global change will not happen. Furthermore, to achieve the sustainability, it is important to reduce animal production – a source of 3% of gas emissions in the EU.

*HIS* underlined that the F2F strategy is revolutionary but missed the objective of reducing animal production. Concerning trade, the agreement with Chile containing animal welfare requirements is a very good example to follow.

*EFFAB* wondered what concrete actions the Commission will present at the Summit. It would be important to address the complexity of the food system and to place animal welfare in the context of healthy food production.

*FESASS* and *EMN* stressed that the reduction of animal production is a global problem, therefore the interests of other continents must also be taken into account at the Summit.

*Greece* expressed its strong support for the objectives of the F2F strategy and its willingness to contribute to its achievements in every possible way.

*Mr Miko* underlined in his response that his role as the convenor of the dialogues is to bring together all the relevant positions for five Action Tracks. The Platform's contribution will be part of the series supporting the EU agenda. Animal welfare is a cross-cutting issue. Therefore, the EU position on animal welfare will be translated into outcomes for all five Action Tracks.

*The Chair* informed that all points of the discussion will be reflected in the summary document.

#### **Portuguese Presidency presentation on long distance transport to third countries [\[ppt\]](#)**

*Ms Jorge Correia* presented the Presidency's priorities on animal welfare, in particular with regard to transport to third countries. In the context of the planned revision of Regulation (EC) No 1/2005 on the protection of animals during transport, a questionnaire on long distance transport to third countries was sent to Member States which provided very valuable comments.

#### **Presentation on the EP resolution on the European Citizens' Initiative "End the Cage Age" and other animal welfare issues**

*Mr De Castro* stressed the increased focus of the AGRI Committee of the European Parliament on animal welfare issues, e.g. the extension of eco-scheme funding to the animal welfare measures or the approach to the issue of animal welfare in transport. Concerning the 'End of the Cage Age' initiative, the EP took an active role there by asking the Commission, through its resolution adopted by an overwhelming majority, to prepare the necessary legislative tools allowing to phase out cages and finally to prohibit the use of cage systems for all animals mentioned in the Initiative.

## Questions & Answers

*Cogeca* expressed concerns regarding consequences of phasing out cages. Such a radical change of production method will require a lot of investment. The price of animal products could increase, preventing some people from buying meat. This can lead to health problems. *Cogeca* welcomed the positive changes in long-distance transport, including the planned improvements in maritime transport. Farmers need live animals to be transported to sell their products.

*Denmark* and *FVE* thanked the Portuguese Presidency for the inspiring presentation. The data from the questionnaire will be very useful for the revision of the transport regulation. The adoption of the Council Conclusions on the transport of animals by sea is eagerly awaited. In addition to the issue of transport, *FVE* asked if the list of supply facilities outside the EU and measures against heat stress has been discussed.

*EMN* stressed that the process of phasing out cages will require a strong involvement of all actors of the food chain, and not just farmers. Such a dramatic change will require a long transition period and appropriate financial support for farmers. On transport, most often animals are transported in good conditions. The enforcement of the current legislation by all Member States is needed to eliminate cases of unfitting transport.

*Mr De Castro*, in answer to *Cogeca*, said that prices will increase but farmers must see this change as an opportunity. Labelling will help them to inform consumers of the mode of production and therefore to justify a higher price for their products. He agreed with *EMN* that financial support to farmers and sufficient transitory period would be necessary.

*Portuguese Presidency*, in response to *FVE*, assured that the two issues on transport were addressed and the conditions of the sea transport can and will be improved.

*The two first sessions of the meeting were conducted as part of the United Nations Food Systems Summit 2021 Dialogues.*

## Session 1: Policy updates

### Outcome of the evaluation of the EU Strategy for the Protection and Welfare of Animals 2012-2015 [\[ppt\]](#)

*Mr Ralchev* presented the main outcomes of the evaluation that will feed into the review process of the animal welfare legislation, which will look at the legislative gaps identified already in 2012 and at any new gaps. Particular attention will be paid to risk areas identified in the evaluation.

### Preliminary results of the Fitness Check of the EU animal welfare legislation and state of play of the planned impact assessment [\[ppt\]](#)

*Mr Juliusson* informed on the methods used and preliminary findings of the Fitness Check. Among them, general shortcomings of the current legislation were identified: lack of clarity, lack of enforcement, not future proof and insufficient & uneven information. To overcome these shortcomings we will need: more enforceable rules, to address the legislative gaps, more synergies

with other policies and to update the rules in light of new scientific evidence and technological developments.

## Questions & Answers

*UECBV* welcomed the planned revision of animal transport rules.

*Eurogroup* recalled its recent ‘*No animals leave behind*’ campaign, which call on the Commission to adopt an ambitious and comprehensive approach for the revision of the legislation. There is a great need to improve animal welfare rules on farm, during transport and slaughter, but also to include in legislation species which are missing. In addition, a shift from the ‘Five freedoms’ as a framework on animal welfare to the ‘Five moral domains’ [David Mellor, Five Domains Model] would be beneficial. It will help to better understand the needs of animals and will also contribute to better enforcement of the legislation.

*Four Paws* stated that there is no possibility to improve long distance transport of live animals. It should be banned. The same for the force feeding. It asked how the evaluation of the strategy will help to ban conventional cages.

*Denmark* supported Eurogroup statement that welfare of all farm animal species must be covered by new legislation which should also allow Member States to adopt stricter measures. Furthermore, instead of elaborating a new animal welfare strategy, the limited resources of the Commission would be better focused on the revision of the legislation, the development of the animal welfare labelling and the promotion of animal welfare standards globally.

*EFAB*, on the fitness check, stressed that producers are applying the legislation. In this respect, the role of EU Reference Centres should be underlined. European breeders fully support the improvement of transport conditions.

*AVEC* stated that the evaluation and Fitness Check showed positive elements of the current legislation, not just its weaknesses. It wondered how the EU would protect European farmers from unfair competition from countries that do not respect EU animal welfare rules. It stressed that the transitional period for the phasing out of cages should be sufficiently long.

### *Answers from the Commission*

The Strategy has strengthened the enforcement of the legislation on prohibition of non-enriched cage systems for hens and the group housing of sows. Several audits were conducted, sometimes ending with infringement procedures. This certainly prepared a ground for the phasing out of cages.

The Fitness Check is not the only source to be used for the future revision of the legislation, there are also the EFSA mandates. Elements mentioned by *AVEC* will be subject to the impact assessment of the future legislation.

## Transport of live animals by sea: update on Commission actions [\[ppt\]](#)

*Ms Sanmartín* presented short and medium-terms Commission actions to improve the maritime transport conditions. Short-term actions include a request to OIE for more proactive role through the Transport Contact Points Network, Member States obligation to register operators in TRACES

and the preparation of an implementing and a delegated acts on records of official controls and on specific rules on inspection of vessels and controls at exit points. The revision of the current animal welfare transport legislation by 2023 is a mid-term action.

### **Update on the Code of Conduct for responsible business and marketing in relation to animal welfare [ppt]**

*Ms Rollier* informed that the EU Code of Conduct is one of the first deliverables of the Farm to Fork Strategy. It sets out the actions that the actors ‘between the farm and the fork’, such as food processors, food service operators and retailers, can voluntarily commit to undertake to tangibly improve and communicate their sustainability performance.

### **Questions & Answers**

*Eurogroup* said that transport of live animals should be banned because it cannot be significantly improved. It urged to shift from live animals’ transport to a transport of meat, carcasses and genetic material.

*Denmark* agreed that the revision of the transport regulation is very much needed and that the long distance transport should be banned.

*Greece* informed about its involvement in resolving the ‘Elbeik crises’. The lessons learnt from it is that EU legislation must be applied to all sectors, not just animal welfare. Therefore, when reviewing animal welfare legislation, other policies and laws should be taken into account. To ensure consistency, we need a uniform legislation that will include health and transport rules.

### *Answers from the Commission*

The delegated and implementing acts are expected to be adopted at the beginning of 2022 so the consultations of Member States will take place in the coming months. The ruling of the Court of Justice concerning transport to third countries will be taken into account. The socio-economic data as well as the existence of the new technologies (e.g. management of temperature in vehicles) will be used in the revision of the transport regulation.

### **Session 2: Subgroup and voluntary initiatives**

#### **Conclusions of the sub-group on animal welfare labelling [ppt]**

*Mr Simonin* presented the conclusions on animal welfare labelling elaborated by the sub-group. The main features proposed by the subgroup for an EU label are: to cover the whole cycle of production, with transport and slaughter of animals farmed for food, and to have a voluntary and multi-tier EU label.

### **Questions & Answers**

*Eurogroup* considered that there is a need to provide full transparency to consumers. In addition, a label should be mandatory to avoid an unequal competition between farmers. *Four Paws* and *CIWF* also supported a mandatory label.

*Denmark* said that the conclusions on animal welfare labelling constitute a very good basis but there is still a lot of work to do. Therefore, will the sub-group continue its work under the new mandate of the Platform?

*FVE* considered the sub-group's conclusions as excellent. Nevertheless, there are some overlaps with the conclusions on the labelling prepared by the FVE experts. The main points are: mandatory versus voluntary label; the assessment of animal welfare in organic farming; slaughtering methods; implementation of a labelling within a pilot project; missing link between the official controls on animal welfare and the labelling.

*Eurocommerce* asked to provide comments in writing underling that the voice of the retail sector would be important to complete the labelling proposal.

*Norway* expressed concerns that the recommendation is too ambitious and covers too broad scope. As a result, it might take a long time to come to an agreement on it; too many scientific indicators would be needed making audits very costly for famers; it will be difficult to pass a right message to consumers. In addition, more discussions on national regulations are needed as some countries have stricter animal welfare rules than the EU.

*COPA, CELCAA, AVEC and CLITRAVI* supported a voluntary label because it can cover larger scope, will allow avoiding confusion between a label and legislation and will give farmers the opportunity to be proactive.

*The Commission* informed that the debate on the animal welfare label is still open and that the conclusions of the sub-group are only one of the contributions in the discussion. The further work of the sub-group depends on the decision at the EU level whether we opt for the animal welfare labelling.

*The Chair* submitted the subgroup's conclusions on labelling for endorsement by the Platform. [The conclusions were adopted.](#)

#### **Guide on best management practice for the welfare of pullets [ppt]**

*Ms Broberg* presented the 'Guide on best management practice for the welfare of pullets' aiming to improve their welfare. Pullets are covered by Council Directive 98/58/EC concerning the protection of animals kept for farming purposes. However, the provisions of the Directive are general and do not address the complex animal welfare challenges, which may arise during the rearing period of pullets, and which may affect their welfare also later in the egg-laying period. The guide is aimed to fill this gap.

#### **Update on activities of the voluntary initiative on responsible ownership and care of equidae [ppt]**

*Mr Owers* informed about the achievements of the group until now (e.g. translation into several languages of documents acknowledged by the Platform) as well as possible topics for the future work (e.g. working equids or update of existing guidelines). The second edition of this voluntary initiative has been created.

## Questions & Answers

*ISAE* considered that it would be good if the voluntary initiative on pullets continue its work and also informed about the start of the Commission pilot project to support the transition to cagefree systems for laying hens in the EU.

*Ms Broberg* agreed that the sub-group on pullets should continue its work.

*The Chair* submitted the 'Guide on best management practice for the welfare of pullets' for endorsement by the Platform. [The guide was adopted.](#)

## SESSION 3: Information and knowledge sharing

### Update from EFSA on ongoing and upcoming animal welfare scientific opinions [ppt]

*Ms Candiani* and *Ms Fabris* presented the scope of the mandates requested by the Commission, needed for the revision of the legislation, the methodology and working methods. For the purpose of developing the requested scientific opinions, a specific welfare task force was created with five working groups devoted to specific animal species or topics (pigs, broilers, calves, laying hens and transport). All draft opinions will be subject to public consultations. Following the 'End the Cage Age' Initiative, EFSA was also requested to provide a sound scientific basis for future legislative proposals on the impact of the caged-systems on the welfare of ducks, geese and quail.

### Third EU Reference Centre for the welfare of ruminants and equines [ppt1] - [ppt2]

*Ms Vornhagen* and *Harry Blokhuis* informed about the designation, by Commission Implementing Decision of 6 May 2021, of the third EU Reference Centre and the scope of its future tasks: welfare of ruminants and equines on farm, in transport and at slaughter related to official controls of EU legislation.

## Questions & Answers

*Four Paws* asked if within the mandate on ducks and geese, EFSA will work on the issue of foie gras.

*Eurogroup* considered that, among the mandates requested by the Commission, a mandate on fish is missing, especially on fish in transport. It wondered if the Commission will ask for it.

*Horse Welfare* and *EMN* asked for a public hearing on EFSA opinion on transport.

*EFSA* answered that the issue of foie gras is not included in the scope of the mandate. Concerning the possibility for commenting on the transport mandate, EFSA plans to organise a stakeholders' conference for this purpose in February 2022.

*The Commission* confirmed that the mandate on ducks, geese and quail was requested in the context of phasing out cages so foie gras is not part of the scope. The mandate has to be restricted

also because of the technical capacity of EFSA. For the same reason, the Commission didn't send the mandate on fish. There is a need to prioritize.

### **Educational materials on alternative methods to surgical pig castration [\[ppt\]](#)**

*Ms Vornhagen* informed that the pig castration is legal in the EU but remains a welfare issue. To tackle it, a pilot project on “*Establishment of a harmonised internal market for pig meat obtained from pigs that have not been surgically castrated*” was initiated in 2017. Based on the results from the study, educational materials on alternative methods to surgical pig castration were elaborated (video and factsheets) and disseminated.

### **CLEARFARM- a platform to control animal welfare in pig and dairy cattle farming [\[ppt\]](#)**

*Mr Manteca* presented the ‘CLEARFARM’ project consisting of developing and validating a software platform powered by an algorithm integrating Precision Livestock Farming (PLF) data to provide animal welfare information throughout the entire production process, as well as other sustainability information, helping producers and consumers in decision making within the pig and dairy cattle value chains.

### **Questions and Answers**

*Eurogroup* wondered how the impact of the educational materials on pig castration will be measured.

*COPA*, on educational materials, expressed the wish to have more information on how to avoid pain at castration as some farmers will continue to use this method.

*The Commission* stressed that the aim is to avoid mutilations and to transition away from surgical castration, either by raising entire male pigs or by vaccinating against boar taint.

### **AOB**

*Mr Léon Arnts*, lead of the voluntary initiative on health and welfare of pets in transport, informed that the group will soon come with the recommendations on registration and identification of dogs. The document will be posted on digital tool for comments.

### **Conclusions and closing of the meeting**

*The Chair* stressed that the richness of today's debate showed how much the support of the Platform members is needed and will be even more requested in the coming busy months.